[redacted]

AFD-0287
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21 February 1961

DISCOVERER CONTINGENCY PLAN

Press Release Action

DISCOVERER XX is presently out of command reach of existing ground stations giving rise to two possible situations:

(1) Re-entry will not occur; or

(2) Capsule may be prematurely released in other than prescribed recovery areas.

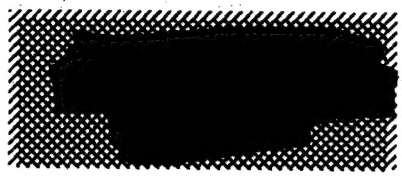
In order to properly control the release of official statements having to do with the latter possibility, the following has been established as the official channels for handling press releases under various conditions and situations.

AFBSD. Until there is enough evidence to assume that re-entry did occur at some point, AFBSD will continue to comply with the DISCOVERER press plan and issue any and all releases having to do with DISCOVERER XX. When there is sufficient evidence to indicate that successful recovery cannot be accomplished, BSD will announce to the press that DISCOVERER XX has experienced a mechanical failure and that no recovery effort will be attempted. Standby forces will continue in place to handle unforeseen situations resulting in possible retrieval.

Headquarters USAF. If it is assumed through evidence that re-entry did occur and a world-wide search is initiated, press release action will at that time be shifted from BSD to Headquarters USAF. In this situation

RAD will continue to be used as necessary to make releases directed by higher headquarters.

Department of State. In the event the situation involves a foreign power, press release action will be shifted from Headquarters USAF to the Department of State and at this point world-wide search will be terminated and Headquarters USAF will decline further comment. A plan will be furnished to the Department of State to assist them in their response to the given situation at the time, depending upon whether the reaction is in response to hostile action or friendly action.

It has been determined that at no time will press releases mention contents of the DISCOVERER XX capsule, unless foreign reaction reveals the true contents. In this event it may be stated that DISCOVERER XX contained ~~a multi-camera~~ certain devices designed to check solar effects upon spooled film, film transport and related ~~camera~~ mechanisms. Research and development tests of this nature are vital to the design and operation of future satellite systems. In no instance will a test objective for such cameras be stated, such as mapping, geodesy, military reconnaissance, etc.

The above information is being furnished to responsible officials within the Department of the Air Force, Department of Defense, Department of State and Central Intelligence Agency.